

BBF "FLAGSHIP" CHURCH HAS RHYTHM & BLUES CONCERT

April 24, 1998 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, www.wayoflife.org) - The following article is from the Jan.-Feb. 1998 issue of *The Fundamentalist Digest* (Don Jasmin, Editor. Maranatha Baptist Church, P.O. Box 2322, Elkton, MD 21922-2322). We have a two-fold purpose in reprinting this article. One, the things which are happening in this key BBF church are a warning to other churches. The desire to keep pace with the changing attitudes of the times is apostasy, and such a philosophy will destroy any church which entertains it. It appears that this church stood at a crossroads a few years ago and it wanted a pastor to lead them in the ways of a worldly concept of church growth. It is never difficult to find such a man. What is much more difficult is to find a pastor who will resist the world on every side, who cares more about truth and faithfulness to God than about numbers and finances. Please note, friends, that apostasy never arrives "full blown." It always begins in "small" things. Once a preacher and a church capitulate in small areas of disobedience, that attitude soon leavens everything. Does God's Word not warn that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"? Two, we desire to inform those who participate in BBF churches about what is happening among those with whom they are in fellowship. I have heard many BBF-associated preachers say in private that they don't agree with things such as Jerry Falwell's ecumenical compromise and the use of Contemporary Christian Music and various other unscriptural things which are going on in BBF circles, but very few of these men will lift their voices publicly to expose by name those who are committing these errors. I am convinced that we must do this, no matter how difficult and unpopular it is. Silence in the face of unrepentant sin and spiritual compromise and doctrinal error is complicity with that compromise.

"Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not" (Prov. 29:24).

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

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By Don Jasmin

The Temple Baptist Church, Plymouth Township, Michigan, is one of the largest and most prominent churches in the Baptist Bible Fellowship (BBF). Pastored in previous generations by such famous Fundamentalists as Dr. Albert Johnson (in the early 1930s), Dr. J. Frank Norris (15 years), and G.B. Vick (15 years as Sunday School Superintendent under Norris and 25 years as pastor), serving as the "flagship" church for the BBF movement. Due to racially changing neighborhoods, the church has also relocated five times in the last 60 years, moving further westward each time; three times in Detroit and twice in the metropolitan Detroit suburbs.

Under Vick's leadership, in its prime, the church averaged more than 4,000 weekly in Sunday School attendance, and contributed more funds to the BBF movement than any other church.

When Vick was at the helm (he also served simultaneously as President of the Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, the BBF's largest school), it was virtually impossible to think of the BBF without simultaneously thinking of the leadership this church provided for the swiftly growing movement.

A TRAGIC CHANGE IN DIRECTION

After Vick's decease, the church began gradually to decline both spiritually and numerically, declining to an attendance of about 1,500 by 1991 (*Baptist Bible Tribune*, Nov. 14, 1991, p. 3). When the current pastor Bradley Powell was called in late 1991, he was told that the church was looking for a pastor who would provide a "new direction" for its ministry and who would "take the church into the 21st century." The Tribune report stated that Powell "believes that the modern church will have to keep up with the changing attitudes" to survive and grow.

PERMEATION BY WORLDLY MUSIC AND WORLDLY MUSICIANS

Under Powell's leadership, the church has certainly "kept up" with the "changing attitudes" of the world! This congregation can never be accused of lagging behind the trends, particularly in the realm of the sensual contemporary rock music (popularly known as CCM). An article in the *Oakland (Michigan) Press* (Nov. 15, 1997, C-2) indicates that the "BIG VOICE," conducted a "rhythm 'n' blues" at the Plymouth based BBF church. The report stated that those who "missed" the show ["show" is the Fundamentalist Digest editor's terminology], need not feel bad, however, since the entire production was "captured" on tape and could be purchased on video. The newspaper reviewer termed it "57 minutes of rhythm 'n' blues voices that just won't quit."

To discerning observers, the sad declension of this "patriarchal" BBF church comes as no surprise since it has been featuring religious rock entertainers for several years. As the writer pens these lines, he has by his side a page from *Calendar* magazine indicating that CCM entertainers Steve Camp and Michael Card were scheduled performers at this church for Sept. 20-22 [year unknown]. Michigan pastor Carroll Turbeville reported in the *Calvary Contender* (Oct. 1, 1996) that Michael Card was also a scheduled performer at the Temple church on Oct. 4, 1996. In 1996, Michael Card and Roman Catholic musician John Michael Talbot jointly produced an album entitled "Brother to Brother." The July 1996 *CCM magazine* stated that this album "glows with a warm and joyous ecumenism."

An advertisement for the 1996 charismatic "Fishnet" Jesus Festival, July 10-13, indicated that Steve Camp was a scheduled performer, along with numerous charismatic individual entertainers and groups. Tony Campolo, the popular Eastern College professor, was also slated for that same festival. While Campolo's credentials are left-wing New Evangelical, he is really an apostate in disguise, holding unbiblical views in major doctrinal and moral areas.

The Jan.-Feb. 1996 *Christian Happenings* magazine contains an advertisement (p. 6) and an announcement (p. 14) for the "Academy of Gospel Music Arts" sponsored by the Gospel Music Association and scheduled for Temple Baptist Church, Feb. 23-24, 1996. This "Academy" included competitions for fledging CCM artists, seminars by CCM industry leaders and concerts by CCM entertainers and competition finalists. "Backstage prizes to the 27th Annual Dove

Awards" in Nashville, Tenn., sponsored by the Gospel Music Association [GMA], were among the prizes offered to the GMA seminar competition winners.

The GMA annually offers its "Dove Awards" to top religious rock CCM artists, entertainers and performers. Believe it or not, a report in *Christianity Today* stated that the GMA had given five Dove awards to Amy Grant. "Hard-edged rock" was the appraisal that the *Christianity Today* article gave to one of Grant's latest albums. In an article that appeared about Grant in the ungodly *Rolling Stone* magazine, she used a sexually offensive phrase and also indicated that she had "gone sunbathing in the nude." The *Christianity Today* article also revealed that "on several occasions" Grant had "appeared with a number of other musical acts in a concert series sponsored by a beer company. The Christianity Today piece also indicated that "Don Butler, executive director of the Gospel Music Association" appeared "at a concert in London that was sponsored by a cigarette company." [We don't know whether Butler is currently employed by the GMA.]

One can only wonder what former pastors, J. Frank Norris and G.B. Vick, would think about the above activities taking place in their former church if they had the opportunity to assess the current trends there.

The capitulation to the world by this BBF church is another nail in the spiritual coffin of a formerly staunch fundamentalist ministry. From God's perspective, like the church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), this church has a name that it lives, but it is dead or about "ready to die." This church is swiftly losing what it was told to "hold fast." Apart from swift and genuine repentance (Rev. 3:3), this noted BBF church will wind up on the scrap heap of apostasy and ecumenism as another tragic casualty in the battle for the faith once delivered unto the saints.